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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, April 9, 1931.

In 3 Hh

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Hints on Caring for Clothes." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletins available: "Stain Removal from Fabrics" and "Laundry Equipment and Methods."

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"Whew!" exclaimed Uncle Ebenezer, looking at the pile of letters the postman brought me this morning. "If I had all that mail to answer, it would take me from now to next Christmas. What are all those housekeepers asking about now?"

"Oh, mostly clothes today, Uncle Ebenezer. How to keep wardrobes wearable by proper care. You know -- taking out spots and keeping in colors, and so on."

Uncle Ebenezer hummed a little tune. Then he said, "Yes, I know. There's something about the flowers that bloom in the spring tra - la that makes the feminine mind turn to frills and fashions. Buying new dresses or fixing up old ones to look like new."

"Especially the latter in a thrifty year like this." I said. "And a good thing too. The family pocketbook always stretches much farther when women know how to care for their clothes. Of course, we all want to look trim for the new season, even if we can't indulge in every new frock that smiles at us from the shop window."

So I took my letters and went over to visit my friends the clothing specialists, who are always ready with helpful advice and information. The pointers they gave me, I hope, will aid both the letter writers and other women with the same problems.

One of my friends writes that she has a light green jersey raincoat which is rubberized inside. It is in perfectly good condition except that it is soiled. How shall she clean it? Since gasoline and other similar cleaning materials are likely to damage the rubber, it is safer to depend on that good old stand-by, soap and water. If I had that raincoat, I would lay it flat on my kitchen table and wash it on the instalment plan using a brush and soap and water. I would dip my brush in warm sudsy water and go over it a section at a time, with brush, soap and water. Sections about a foot square or so are probably easiest to work on conveniently.



I would be careful not to get the coat too wet as I worked. Just a little of that sudsy water will do the best job. Then I would dip the brush in clear water and go over the same section again to rinse it, being careful again to avoid too much moisture. The damp part should then be dried with an absorbent cloth. After that I would move on to another section and repeat the process until the coat was all cleaned. For especially soiled places, like the collar or cuffs, a little extra soap and rubbing may be needed. Hang the coat to dry on a padded hanger. Keep it away from extreme heat which rots rubber.

So much for the green raincoat. The next questions are about colored clothes. Several housekeepers want to know how to take pickle stains out of dresses of various colors.

Pickles? What kind -- sweet, sour, dill, oil, onion, cauliflower, mixed? Oh, my. That makes me hungry. I ought to keep my mind off pickles or the first thing you know I'll be nibbling between meals. And that is forbidden in our household. Pickle stains is the subject in hand, anyway, not pickles to eat. Well, where's my thinking cap? Let me approach this subject scientifically. What does pickle juice contain that might make a stain? Salt, for one thing. Or sugar or vinegar, or oil in oil pickles.

What will remove these substances? Cold water is probably the best and safest bet. Both salt and sugar dissolve in water. The difficulty here is that the water used to remove the stain may itself cause a ring or water spot which may spoil the appearance as much as the original stain. Then why not avoid the water ring by using with water a powdered absorbent such as Fuller's earth or corn starch? We'll make a thick paste of this white powder and then we'll apply it to the pickle stain. The water in the paste will remove the stain; the absorbent will prevent a water spot. Let the paste stand on the fabric several hours until it is thoroughly dried. Then brush it off. Several applications may be needed to remove every trace of the stain.

If oil pickles leave a grease stain after this treatment, remove it with carbon tetrachloride or some other grease solvent.

Vinegar may sometimes cause a discoloration of the fabric because of the action of acid on the dye. What will counteract acid, Billy? Alkali is right. Billy, you know, is studying chemistry in school. Well, what is a simple alkali for the housewife to use? Right again. Baking soda or household ammonia. When a fabric is discolored by an acid, use on it a weak solution of soda and water or a teaspoon of household ammonia in water. It may work wonders. Now there was my last summer's lavender linen dress. But I mustn't stop to tell that whole story. I'll just tell you that it looked like disaster when I spilled some vinegar on it, but a little soda and water saved the day. So that dress is going to do service again this year, because its color is just as lavender as it was the day I bought it.

Since we're on the subject, let's discuss caring for colored clothes.



How can I set the color in a gingham dress?" inquires one letter. The old-fashioned way was to soak the dress or fabric in salt and water. The specialists in clothing tell me, however, that this cannot be guaranteed as a sure-fire, ever-reliable method. Sometimes it helps just to soak the goods a short time in cold water. Occasionally there is a surplus of dye that will come out with a cold-water bath, and after that the bleeding will end. But if you see that the color is determined to keep on running, avoid hot water in laundering. Always wash the garment in cool water and make the process as hasty as possible. Squeeze out the garment as dry as you can, shake it to get rid of extra moisture, and dry it as rapidly as possible. But never in the sun, of course, for the sun may fade it. Avoid rolling it up and allowing it to stand for ironing. And don't let it hang and drip so that the color will drain down in streaks toward the bottom of the dress. The idea is to be too quick for the color and to have the laundering all done before there is time for the color to run much. Just keep a jump ahead of the dye.

In these days it is usually possible to obtain fast colors in most materials. When the fabric is not known to be permanent in color, it is a good idea to experiment with a sample or an unexposed part of the garment, before attempting to wash it. If you're buying new material, test a sample to see if it runs. Or if the dress is ready-made, try out an unexposed part such as the end of the belt. If the color is fast, there is no reason why several frocks may not be put in the washer together.

In washing colored materials, soaking is not advisable unless the garment is very soiled and the color known to be fast. The washing and rinsing water should be kept lukewarm. When the color shows a tendency to bleed, use colder water. Oh, yes, there's the soap to be considered. I almost forgot to mention that. Mild soap should always be used for colored garments. And if you have to use a water softener be sure to use a mild one.

As I said, do the washing rapidly. Rinse in two or three clear cool waters. Squeeze and shake out the clothes and dry them quickly and in the shade.

It is generally best to iron the garment while it is still damp. A moderately warm iron should be used, since the heat of the iron often causes the color to run.

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Tomorrow we'll talk about spring greens. The fields and meadows are full of tender wild plants at this time of year that make delicious greens. My grandmother used to call them potherbs from the highways and by-ways. There are also excellent greens on the market. We'll discuss both tame and wild greens and ways of cooking them. Then we'll have a menu for Sunday dinner.

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